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MAGONIA

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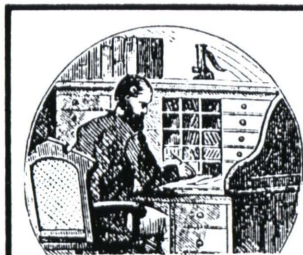
A new name appears on our masthead this issue, that of Robert Rankin, author of the best-selling 'Brentford Trilogy', three wonderfully funny books which will appeal to every ufologist and forteen. (The Antipope, The Brentford Triangle, and East of Eden are all available in Pan paperback from your local bookshop.)

Besides presenting his own individual outlook on the strange world around us, he will also be introducing us to the amazing work of Hugo Rune, one of the twentieth centuries unknown sages!

loader towards Boulogne docks (a scheme to save petrol, claimed the sceptical French).

A disaster then? Well, no, because we got a lot of good lectures, ideas were exchanged, friendships made and renewed, and we talked, talked, talked, in French and English and halting Franglais, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

But there is a verse, I am told, in Nostradamus, about a group of Englishmen returning from a disaster in Boulogne. Explain that one, sceptic Sandell!



EDITORIAL NOTES

IT seemed like the normal sort of thing when Nigel Watson's car broke down taking your Editor to the 3rd Anglo-French UFO Conference at Hardelot, near Boulogne. After all, struggling to the first conference we woke up most of Alric Avenue at five o'clock in the morning pushing his frozen vehicle up and down the road to start it.

It seemed a bit worse when we missed the ferry at Dover by five minutes so crossed to Calais. This meant an extra twenty miles drive in the dark on the wrong side of the road - but that was Nigel's problem. I started to get rather worried when arriving at the hotel we found Hilary Evans' car was totally incapacitated by a major disaster of the type which French mechanics describe with a particular type of shrug. More disasters, it appeared, had befallen the French contingent - a breakdown on the autoroute.

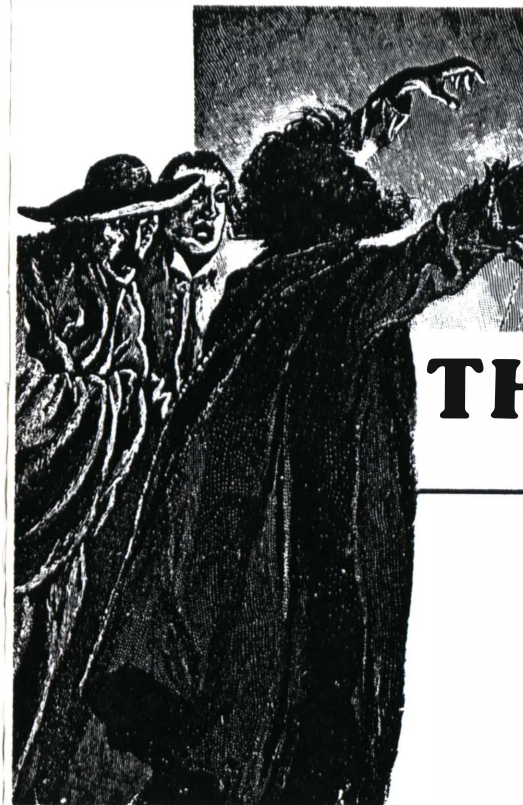
Well, the hotel was OK. Or would have been if it hadn't closed down at eleven o'clock (this is France remember - no licensing hours here!) and displayed alarming notices about the doors being guarded with laser beams after lights-out. Attempts at getting a drink after hours provoked the sort of argument which can adequately be dealt with only in the French language (I caught little of it except the heartfelt plea, "You disgrace the name of France before our English guests!"). There was also a notice about not taking drink into your rooms. Significantly, unlike the others, this was in English only.

This Tour de Fawty was guarded by a lady who appeared to be a close relative of one of those little charmers who used to sit knitting at the guillotine, and took great pleasure in telling most of us, at check-out on Sunday, that no, our credit cards wouldn't do nicely. After a series of complex financial transactions which probably led to sterling's present fluctuations on the financial markets, an arrangement was struck with those who were farsighted enough to have a French bank account, and trusting enough to accept the cheques of a crowd of stoney-broke ufologists.

High-spot of the weekend was the sight of Hilary's car being driven off on a low-

I first met the London Underground Platform Maniac when riding on the Circle Line between Blackfriars and Embankment on 25 February 1985. Not in person, happily, but as a story told by the middle-aged lady opposite me to her friend. I wasn't meant to be included in this audience of one, of course, but something about her hushed tone advised me to make sure that I was, even if only as an eavesdropper. So my ears flapped long and hard enough to pick up the following...

THE MANIAC ON THE PLATFORM



realized that here was no accidental-inevitable kind of nudge which the seasoned Tube traveller learns to live with. Up came her hands again, out they thrust in action-replay, condemning an imaginary victim to untimely death under an imaginary train. "This is deliberate!" she hissed. "He does is deliberately!"

The Maniac, as her tale unfolded, was or is everything we have come to look for in a homicidal lunatic: secretive, essentially anonymous, impulsive in choice of victim but compulsive in execution. Above all else, he is never caught; he remains a shadowy figure who is subtle to the point of fiendishness. For example, he times his push-from-behind to coincide with the climactic moment that the train surges out of the darkness of the tunnel and into the garish light of the station. The shove is disguised - goes unnoticed - in the anticipatory forward-jostle of the passengers as they see the train arriving at last. Only the police know that it isn't just an accident, but one in a series

MICHAEL GOSS

of ghastly murders by a killer who can't be traced. How come we have not been warned of this elusive, faceless mass-murderer. The narrator explained that the police had hushed up all details lest the publicity inspired a spate of 'copy-cat' murders. It was dreadful, she admitted, but there were always unbalanced people around who'd do exactly the same thing if they read about it in the papers. She appealed to her audience - was it not indisputable that "when people hear about something like that, something goes in their minds?" (sic - or maybe even sick).

The story, let's recall, was being told as stone-cold fact and if the listener found

THE London Underground harbours a veritable Maniac. Needless to tell, this Maniac - and the narrator used that very word, by the way - is of the definitely homicidal variety. He is further presumed to be male and is not known to favour one Underground station more than another. No-one has seen him apparently, and yet oddly enough the narrator was able to reconstruct the individual form taken by his homicidal mania in rather convincing detail. The Maniac lurks on crowded Tube platforms, taking his stand just behind the front ranks of oblivious passengers who are waiting for the train. In front of him, very near the platform edge and indeed to near to recover herself if something made her lose her balance, is his chosen victim: a young woman. Then, as the train sweeps into the station, the Maniac gives her a short, abrupt but irresistibly-powerful thrust in the back. She topples forward and...

To clarify the Maniac's MO, the narrator raised her palms at chest level and with grimly-earnest expression mimed a sharp, malicious push-away action. As she acted out his demented deed her face momentarily borrowed the flinty eyes and terrible rigidity of your typical screen-play psychopath. She was absolutely insistent that her friend

It a little dubious she was too polite or too overawed to say so. The narrator herself all-too-blattantly wanted it to be taken that way: she also wanted to elicit an appropriate alarmed or disgusted reaction to her tale. And for myself...

That a person has from time to time been thrust into the path of an oncoming train - accidentally, at least - I could believe. That somebody should 'encourage' someone else to take that trip - purposely, homicidally - I could just about concede to be possible. Movie hit-men are forever pushing folk under subway trains and it wouldn't take an inspired mind to glimpse the possibilities should his or her victim cooperatively place him/herself in the position to make it all seem feasible. Again, there are some pretty strange characters to be found in our large cities these days and some of them use the Underground.

What strikes me as neither believable nor faintly possible is that a bona-fide maniac (or more than one of them?) is prowling the LT Underground stations and pushing passengers from platform to perdition on some kind of regular basis.

An ultra-sympathetic person, a conspiracy buff or supreme optimist might reply that the Maniac on the Platform is a believable, literal sort of nightmare - the more so as he is never caught. Despite this, I prefer to think of him not in terms of prosaic News-At-Ten fact, but as one of the latest modern myths. The Maniac is a canard, a whale tumour story, an urban legend. That is, he's folklore - or, since these incidents always seem to be confined to the purported experiences of that perennially-unavailable witness known as the 'friend-of-a-friend', we can borrow the coining of *Fortean Times* editor Paul Sieveking and call him *foaflore*.

Whether folklorists have already recorded the Maniac on the Underground I don't know. The overheard conversation of 25th February was my own introduction to the motif, but I find it impossible to think I was witnessing any kind of debut. The Polish of the story argues against that and it is far more possible that we have here a variant on a theme which is common to any city with a long-established, well-developed subway system. Nor can we eliminate the idea that it is a reworking of a 19th Century cautionary tale that may originally have belonged to an overground rather than an Underground setting. My point in bringing it forward here is that it was new to me, that I'd like to know if anyone else has encountered him or it and moreover that it appears to be part of a growing but still under-studied folklore of the London Tubeways.

The essential characteristics of an urban

legend as analysed by Prof. Jan Harold Brunvand in his immensely popular *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (1983) were exemplified during the conversation going on across the car from me. The anecdotal account account was offered as something that had 'really happened'. Narrator and listener tacitly agreed on that point; the latter made only a token effort to challenge the speaker's material ("Where ever did you hear all this?") and the speaker responded with token corroboration ("I knew a man whose daughter..."). The setting was apposite (a story of the London Underground told on a London Underground train) and thence more immediate to teller and listener. Finally, the horror-factor was enhanced by the insanely haphazard way the Maniac fell on victims quite at random. True enough, the story-line only provided for attacks on young (by inference, innocent) girls, but the implication was that nobody could consider him- or herself safe. The Maniac could be anyone. He could be standing behind you on the platform right now. Yes, you might be his next victim!

Then again, the Maniac is never caught. This adds to the sense of terror and inserts an element of doubt as to who he is and why he behaves as he does. The impenetrable anonymity creates a narrative situation that is integral to stories of this type: for our enlightenment concerning him we're wholly dependent on the narrator having access to access to certain information. We can't simply pick up a newspaper and read all about it. And for the narrator to be able to supply this crucial 'inside' information, the source must have some personal involvement in the action, albeit at a stage or so removed. He or she must be able to corroborate the tale by being the traditional friend of a friend.

Imagine my delight when, with a slight but noticable emphasis in her voice, the narrator announced that she "actually knew" someone to whom it had happened - or rather, as she hastily amended, her friend knew a man (a doctor) whose daughter had been killed by the Maniac. Aside from acting as a guarantee that the story is true - we're asked to accept that it is because the narrator knows the main witness/source - this reference to the Doctor's Daughter throws a fascinating light on how an urban legend can assail more than one basic emotion in its audience.

This is not merely a horror story, but a pathetic tragedy. The girl was killed not long before she was due to be married - a sub-motif relating this story to many ghost tales which use the same kind of emotive patterning. Worse still, she died as the result of a terrible whim - her whim or that of

Fate's. She had not planned to leave her house at all that day and only did so on some sudden impulse or luck governed trick of the narrative. Had she not left her home she would not have placed herself in the hands of the Maniac... The narrator modestly disclaimed precise knowledge as to why the Doctor's Daughter had gone to catch the Tube - "I forget what it was, but she had no reason for going out..." - except to state that it was a Terrible Bit of Luck. The Bride-To-Be motif is too corny (and too weepie) to satisfy the discerning critic, but the Fatal Unnecessary Journey is a nice touch. It makes the encounter between victim and killer take on dimensions of a Greek tragedy in which both seem blind instruments of a cruel, sardonic Destiny. This is good for the impact of the story, just as the asserted personal relationship between narrator and relative of the victim does wonders for its credibility-rating.

The Maniac, we're led to believe, is still out there and "ready to do it again". With all due respect to the narrator, though, I don't think we need to worry about him too much. Like the Hook - an escaped psycho so named for the appendage with which he slaughters victims in lovers' lanes - or the chuckling phone-caller who preys on the nerves of babysitters, the Maniac on the Platform is one of several heavily-macabre urban legends to have appeared over the last few decades. Insanity is always frightening, especially when it is holding a naked razor to our throat.

As urban legends go, the Maniac is a somewhat superior invention. It plays upon often unacknowledged fears (those centring upon insanity, subway travel, assault-and-battery and also upon dark, claustrophobic situations generally); as we've just seen, it also canvasses maudlin pathos as well as outrage by making the victims young and female. Best of all, it is impossible to deny the existence of the Maniac in rationalist, reductionist terms. We all know that there are such people as Yorkshire Rippers and Moors Murderers at large among us, masquerading as normal folk: psychopathic personalities so aberrant in retrospect that they seem mythical. The Underground Maniac may seem like a myth, too, observes our narrator, but that's inevitable - we have no solid proof that he exists and never will have. The police are purposely withholding it for fear of panic and imitation murders. Pointless our asking the transport authorities if he exists, as they'd deny it as automatically as the doors shut on a tube train; they'd issue those denials for the same reason as the police. And of course, the Maniac is never caught - so once again he can't prove

to us that he really exists. In this sense the rumour becomes perversely believable.

One motive for my offering these notes on the Maniac is the anticipation that fairly soon the press will break their silence concerning him. At present we have here an urban legend which is about to gain wider currency and hence make the all-critical transition from oral tradition to printed pseudo-fact, with all that goes along with it.

The star of the story is, on the other hand, less credible than the other Underground bogeymen we are told to look out for - the muggers, rampaging soccer hooligans, bombers, drugsters, molesters and all the other assorted wierdos. This need not mean that he doesn't owe very much to real life; for instance he could be a rumour invoked to embroider the facts of real-life incidents where unfortunates fell accidentally or by self-destructive urge into the path of a train. Or perhaps the Maniac was born in some thriller-writer's brain; a push under a Tube train is a pretty standard way to remove a subordinate character from a script. But more interesting than where he came from is what he may happen to mean.

Attempts to read morals into urban legends are not always attended by convincing results; frequently the 'message' is just too banal to account for the popularity and distribution of the story. Perhaps the Maniac is a exaggerated caution against standing too close to the edge of the platform - a message that London Transport has been winging our way for years. More pertinent is the suggestion that the Maniac personifies the actual fear of being pushed beneath a subway train, a more imaginative dramatisation than the terror of falling onto the live-rail which haunted my childhood trips to subways. Again, the use of the 'push from behind' way of murdering victims in thrillers may have popularised the motif.

Without exerting too much effort, the Underground has become the venue for a gamut of uncanny and bizarre 'true' stories which may be classed as an evolving folklore of the subways. These stories play on the fear that the Underground is both a dangerous and mysterious realm - the more so because we take it for granted and think so superficially about what might be in it. There is a dramatic paradox in the prosaic fact that it is used by millions of unsuspecting folk every day and yet can act as focus for fears-wishes-rumours that in its darkest corners lurk people or things who want to harm us. The Maniac is about halfway on a scale of homicidal nightshapes that boasts ordinary muggers at one end and giant man-eating rats at the other (the latter motif,

incidentally, was used in a not-so-brilliant episode of *The New Avengers* a few years back).

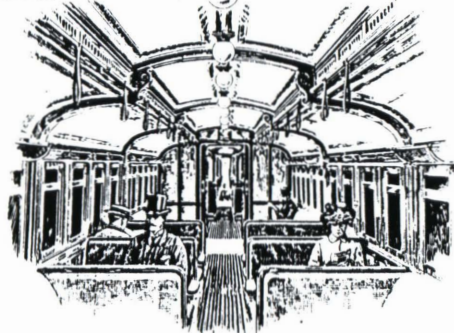
One prominent usually unvoiced subway neurosis is that having voluntarily gone down there we might never be able to come back up again. The claustrophobic fear of being inescapably entombed in a Tube train - something sensed by most people at one time or another, I fancy - lends itself to a foaflore motif which has appeared sporadically since the late 70's and most likely for a long time before that date. The narrative details alter: the basic theme, in which a train full of passengers is sealed up deliberately and forever in a tunnel, stays consistent. There are always unavoidable circumstances which force the transport authorities to take this appalling decision; in each case the victims cannot be rescued and must be walled up where they stand in order that some numerically more horrendous disaster may be avoided.

When I heard the tale, this 'excuse' was that an unexploded bomb had somehow landed on the track and - don't ask me how! - any rescue attempt would have brought the Thames flooding down with unspeakable widespread loss of life. So naturally they walled 'em up alive... This was told to me by a friend while the train we were on was standing motionless in the inky dark stranded between stations on one of those unaccountable halts that they make whenever you're in a particular hurry, feel ill or can't get a seat. I didn't appreciate hearing it, even if I didn't believe it!

It's quite a compact assumption that any orally-established story is capable of graduating to the printed page from whence, reinforced by the credibility that the printed word bestows on most things, it may become the source and authority for further versions of the old story - many of the 'improved' by changes of location and by other revisions/embellishments. I'd like to predict that the Platform Maniac is treading this path and that he is over halfway there by now. In other words, what I heard as a straightforward oral yarn should soon occur in newspapers, magazines and books (the 'true-life crime' type, mayhap) and with significant changes of detail. The factors which may work for or against this assumption are to complicated to enter into here. But the Walled-Up Train motif has already graduated, it would seem.

Naturally enough, the ground-plan of mazelike burrowings that we call the London Underground is known to few laypersons. This makes it a little easier to believe that somewhere in the twists and turns of long-

disused tunnels - further blocked by falling masonry or by a hastily-erected brick wall - there stands an abandoned piece of rolling stock. On board is a grim cargo of asphyxiated passengers which the narrator usually describes with ghoulish delight as skeletons inside ragged remains of crinolines and frock-coats.



This, or something desperately like it, was the picture conjured up by 19-year-old Pamela Goodsell in 1978 when she claimed to have fallen upon, and literally into, a hidden tunnel near the site of the old Crystal Palace station in south London. (See the *London Evening News* for 29 September of that year). If anything ever came out of this peculiar story I wish someone could tell me about it; at the same time Miss Goodsell's report was waved aside by various organisations with professional or historical interests in the Underground and it wasn't helped by her failure to trace the tunnel when she went back a second time. There are always problems when an urban legend threatens to come to life, yet it seems safe to say that we'll be hearing more of this particular adventure - in revamped form, probably. And that doesn't sound an outrageous feat of prediction from where I'm sitting.

Familiar as it may seem, then, the Underground is the breeding-place of myths and nightmares. However often we use it, the place retains a vaguely menacing atmosphere which has nothing to do with the stale air: we don't know what is waiting down that dark burrow where the platform lights end. This public utility is a place we should not venture to be in.

Fed by genuine tragic accidents and more especially by the occasional suicide - an act in itself so alien, so abhorrently inexplicable to us that we begin to ask whether the victim really jumped or was pushed - the Underground becomes a theatre for ghosts, goblins, maniacs and other nightmares. And now that I've reached the end of this

Continued on page 22

In UFO and paranormal research, more than any other field of study, the role of the investigator is crucial. Here Maurizio Verga looks at what it means to be an investigator; and Shirley McIver asks what ufology needs to be a science.

PORTRAIT OF A RESEARCHER



Illustration by Dominique Hubert

MAURIZIO VERGA

THE unknown produces an irresistible call which few people escape; it gives rise to a mixture of glamour and fear that - beyond its psychological origins - acts as an 'escape valve' from reality.

The anxieties and dramas of everyday life vanish when one involves oneself with something beyond 'everyday reality': the search for mystery allows one to escape completely to a new dimension where one moves in the role of protagonist. Holding such a role is very stimulating, it represents an effective means of revaluing oneself, and feeling somehow superior to others. In fact the student feels to be the potential discoverer and teacher of the solution of the mystery

The kind of mystery we are dealing with always concerns questions which are able radically to change our present culture and knowledge. In itself this would justify the 'importance' students of such mysteries ascribe to themselves.

The passion for mystery can become a nearly indispensable 'drug'. One sometimes notes in such students situations comparable with unwholesome states of attachment and identification with the subject, sometimes assuming typically fideistic features. It is obvious that the chief aim of these 'pioneers of the unknown' should be the solution of the mystery, and secondly the diffusion of that solution. But the researchers themselves don't want the solution of mystery

at all, because this would involve the end of their own self-image, their illusions and their personal drug. So one is confronted with the contradictory co-existence of the (illusory?) attempt to explain the mystery, and the strong wish that it remain such.

It's obvious that when the show ends, the amusement ends too. This is a real danger which has always conditioned anomaly students' thoughts and activities, directing them to particular choices and attitudes in the development of their thought.

Attempts at explanation of the major mysteries have suffered greatly through such an ambiguous situation, such attempts always remaining at a vague and contradictory level.

Anomaly students suffer from the necessity of making others believe what they already accept as fact. They do not content themselves with probing the problem without concern for the layman (i.e., mass media and the technical/scientific 'establishment'); rather they strive to acquaint the 'external world' with their beliefs, squandering most of their available energies. If this 'external world' did accept and recognise the validity of their arguments, and therefore the existence of the phenomena under study, such researchers would rise to the rank of 'science pioneer'.

The continuing attempt to convince the 'others' of the existence of the problem (in the case of the 'UFO mystery this largely takes the form of the search for physical evidence) essentially represents the search for a personal revenge against the denigrators - the ill-famed sceptics.

This attitude is understandable, within limits, but in some people it develops a pathological form; others assume such an attitude passively, without becoming aware of it. Notwithstanding this, many students consider the search for the decisive proof and the persuasion of the public to be a real mission, moved and justified by their own belief in the phenomenon. They consider themselves the bearers of a truth, usually masked under technological motifs, that has to be propagated and accepted. The sole method of achieving such a goal is than imposed by the prevailing culture - which generally means 'material proof', an argument which is a thorn in the side of ufologists, in particular.

Material Limits. We have looked at major psychological characteristics of those persons studying mysterious matters as an object of enquiry. But there are also some material aspects we could call 'logistical' ones: unpreparedness about fundamental scientific doctrines; lack of means; impossibility of full-time

and professional researches and planning incapacity. These problems condition, indeed identify, the students of the field. It is opportune to say a few words on this subject

Technical/Scientific Unpreparedness.

Although many people are involved in research in these subjects, only a very few are persons carrying out activities directly linked with disciplines useful for a cognitive approach to the problem. Others attempt autonomous understanding of the subjects, striving to deal with their own 'researches' in the light of their own study. Inevitably, these results are devalued by their preparation, which is fragmentary. Additionally, some students will devote themselves to mysterious phenomena trusting only to their original knowledge and education: nearly always this is inadequate, and so useless for any serious cognitive approach.

A direct consequence of this lack of will and capacity to develop a rational research system can be noted in the emphasis (very noticeable in ufology) on outward appearances of the subject. Another effect of this lack of preparation is the continuous reductionist effort [*]. For example, ufologists will collect reports relating the observation of phenomena with similar characteristics for the purpose of extolling a belief which consigns all UFOs as having a common origin. More generally, researchers will draw conclusions from a specific group of events (entity reports, for example) which are extrapolated to the complexities of the whole phenomenon.

In such a way one makes the problem considerably easier, so rendering it more accessible; but besides the reductionist effort, there is also the attempt at circumscribing the peculiarities of its manifestations for the sake of making it more 'rational' and consequently more acceptable.

Lack of Means: Impossibility of full-time researches.

As anomaly research does not have professional characteristics, there are inherent faults in both organising the enquiry and data collation. For nearly all UFO, anomaly and paranormal researchers the study of mystery is only a hobby, to which is devoted the (restricted) available spare time. Resources are so limited that they do not reach essential objectives which need conspicuous economic efforts, over and above regular intense study in terms of time. The co-operation of several isolated individuals in a association would lead to a remarkable increase in the available means. But things proceed in a different way, tending to maintain the dispersion of the few available forces: this is both because

such groups are inclined to make use of their resources in useless activities (propaganda, conferences, varied trinkets), and to limited numbers of supporters, as many people prefer to remain independent to preserve their own individuality.

Often the financial investment of the individual research may be considerable. Often the student neglects other kinds of diversion or occupation to concentrate on the purchase of materials or attending meetings. It is a passion that often assumes the features of a drug! In order to establish the figure of the competent professional researcher in this specific field, adequate funding, apart from any other considerations (it is enough here to mention the question of the choice of the right person, or their training), would be needed. This is unimaginable in most aspects of anomaly research.

Organising and Planning Incapacity.

There are two basic elements, connecting with the two previously mentioned points, which contribute to this negative factor. The first one can be found in the lack of prepared specialised enquirers who would be capable of managing a programme of researches.

Secondly, there is a certain spirit of strong independence, coupled with an unwillingness for collaboration, among those who represent the focal point of this work - in particular, ufologists. Generally they like to operate alone, wishing to gather all possible results and benefits of their own activities around themselves. Too often the advantage of being part of a well-known organisation is irresistible: many students ('fans' might be a better word) join it for the status that membership is thought to bestow. In reality this is an illusion, as such 'fans' keep intact all their individualistic characteristics. Such researchers are still reluctant to co-operate with others, for fear of supplying 'precious' information to them - the possession of such 'valuable' data is seen as a method of assuming further status.

Some Considerations on Ufologists and Research Groups:

When the problem of 'flying saucers' came on the scene in 1947, there arose, almost immediately, the first 'ufologists'. The interest in such a matter was remarkable, owing to the strong emotional state it provoked. Hundreds of amateurs began to collect information and news on the subject. There was a clear cut division between those who thought such sightings really unexplainable, and those who instead presented identifications

in conventional terms. The former put forward various interpretations, following mystical or occult themes, that with the passing of time and increasing number of sightings, assumed a more and more fantastic tone.

The conviction that the remarkable mass of cases has something real, and the development of conjectures that promised an 'explanation' of the UFO phenomenon; as well as the particular psychological and cultural conditions of that period, contributed to the increase and diffusion of interest in the phenomenon.

Since then innumerable people throughout the world have become students (or, again, 'fans') of ufology, even though those who have discussed and dealt with the problem on a serious and objective level are probably only measured in a few hundreds. An analogous pattern can be developed for the clubs and groups which have arisen practically everywhere. This activity has led, for many people, into the growth of the 'ufologist', who for many people has a precise placing in society, holding a certain status as a function of his work.

In the second part of this article Maurizio Verga will look in more detail at the figure of the independent researcher, and the UFO group.

A SCIENCE OF UFOLOGY

SHIRLEY McIVER

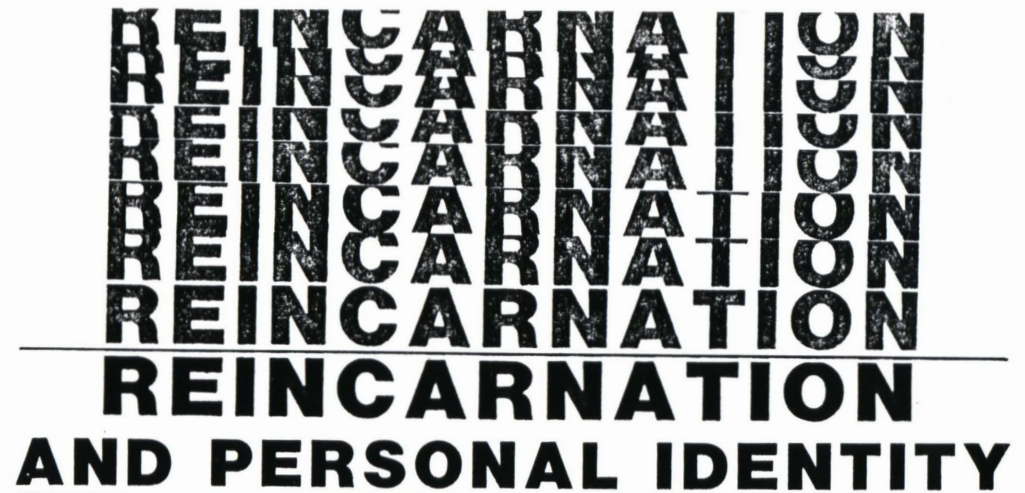
IN 1979 James Oberg won the *New Scientist*/Cutty Sark Whisky prize for the best research on UFOs with an essay entitled *The Failure of the 'Science' of Ufology*. He argued that ufology "refuses to play by the rules of scientific thought". Here I want to present the view that the main problem in ufology is not a failure to follow certain logical and methodological procedures of the kind outlined by philosophers of science, but the fact that it has a social basis in popular culture, rather than the elite culture of science.

From this basic problem of its position in popular culture, a number of factors follow which influence its attempts to become scientific.

3. Knowledge.

There is no coherent body of knowledge in ufology: information is drawn from a wide variety of areas. This is partly due to overlap with the 'cultic milieu' - that area of popular culture concerned with metaphysics, the occult, new religions, the unexplained, etc. This milieu has grown considerably since the mid-1960's and has well developed social networks making it very easy for ufologists to come into contact with such subjects as astrology, ley-lines and occultism, once they begin research.

Not only that, but there is the social movement which has grown up around UFOs and which appears to be fundamentally suspicious of science. The original literature on UFOs was concerned with the failure of science to investigate UFOs in an adequate manner. The link between science and the government (in the USA predominantly) in a conspiracy to conceal information about UFOs, and general distrust of government and science following the use of atomic weapons at the end of World War II. The suspicion of science which lies at the heart of the UFO social movement is likely to hinder those attempting to develop scientific research on UFOs.



JOHN HARNEY

4. Information Distribution.

Ufologists have little control over their image in the Press, so that UFO reports are frequently treated as 'human interest stories' rather than hard news. Also there are no clearly defined spokespersons for the subject which means that fringe people get access to the media and are portrayed as representative of ufology.

It follows from the preceding points that if ufology wishes to become more scientific, it must:

- a. Detach itself completely from the social movement that has grown up around UFOs, and keep itself separate from the 'cultic milieu'.
- b. Obtain some control over the way the subject is portrayed in the Press, establishing clearly defined media spokespersons.
- c. Gain access to scientific journals by connecting UFOs to existing problems in the various areas of science and through the recruitment of scientists.

MOST people know what reincarnation is. That is, most people would say that the statement that we live a succession of lives in different bodies is either true or false. For it to be true or false it must be meaningful. But will this apparent meaningfulness stand up to attempts to analyse it.

Apparent memories of past lives are usually obtained by means of the procedure known as hypnotic regression. Subjects are asked to recall earlier and earlier experiences until, finally, they are asked to recall events which happened before they were born. This sometimes produces seeming memories of past incarnations.

Sceptical scientists criticize such reports by saying that the subjects have invented such stories out of a natural desire to please the hypnotist. If the story of a past life seems to be accurate, then it is said the subject must have obtained the details, either consciously or subconsciously, from books, documents or other historical material.

But let us suppose that the subject's account of experiences in a past life is demonstrated to be very accurate and that it throws new light on certain historical questions. Let us further suppose that it is demonstrated that the subject could not have obtained the historical facts by any normal means. Does this, then, prove that the subject is the same person as the historical person whose experiences have been recalled?

Here we are faced with the problem of personal identity. Now the usual criterion for personal identity is bodily identity, so that P2 at a time t_2 is the same person as P1 at an earlier time t_1 , if and only if P2 has the same body as P1. However, we also have the criterion of psychological continuity, as favoured by John Locke, whose version of the psychological theory has been summarised by Richard Swinburne as follows:

According to Locke, memory alone (or 'consciousness', as he often calls it) constitutes personal identity. Loosely - P2 at t2 is the same person as P1 at an earlier time t1, if and only if P2 remembers having done and experienced various things, where these things were in fact done and experienced by P1. [1]

Locke actually distinguished between these two kinds of identity - physical and psychological - by distinguishing between a 'man' and a 'person', as in the following passage:

But yet the soul alone, in the change of bodies, would scarce, to anyone but to him that makes the soul the man, be enough to make the same man. For should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's last life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler as soon as deserted by his own soul, everyone sees he would be the same person with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions; but who

would say it was the same man? The body too goes to the making of the man and would, I guess, to everybody, determine the man in this case, wherein the soul, with all its princely thoughts about it, would not make another man: but he would be the same cobbler to everyone besides himself. [2]

In the case of reincarnation our criterion is not bodily identity but psychological continuity. This means that P2 should be able to remember the actions and experiences of P1. Cases in which this seems to happen are revealed by hypnotic regression. However, it is possible to have false memories. Quite apart from reincarnation, cases in which people seem to remember events which demonstrably never occurred are quite common, for example when witnesses in a courtroom disagree with one another. In some cases they are purjuring themselves, but usually their memories of the events they are trying to recall are false or hopelessly distorted. In such cases though, we do not usually suppose that these witnesses are not the same persons at those who were present at the events in question, because we have evidence of bodily identity. For example, if police were satisfied that I was not physically present when a certain crime was committed they would certainly not call me as a witness. Thus in all practical, everyday circumstances we equate personal identity with bodily identity.

However most of us would agree that there are two aspects to personal identity, depending on whether it is the identity of oneself or that of others which is in question. For example when considering the concept of reincarnation most people would be inclined to say: "One day I shall die and eventually I either shall or shall not be reincarnated, and if I am reincarnated I either shall or shall not remember my previous existence". So it seems that memory is not an absolutely essential factor when it is a question of whether I have been or shall be reincarnated, but it is essential in the case of some other person.

Let me try to clarify this apparent difference between the identity of one's self and other selves. The feeling that most of us have is that there is something 'special' about one's own identity, even though we try not to be self-centred and are careful not to fall into a solipsistic state of mind. Suppose, for instance, that a person who has met me some time ago meets me again and recognises me by noting that my physical appearance, manner of speaking and character are pretty much the same as he remembers them from our last meeting. He thus recognises me as being the same as the one he

met on a certain previous occasion. This is all very well, but most of us feel that there must be some further fact, transcending these common-sense criteria, which is essential to our continuity as conscious individuals. As Derek Parfit says, some people "...believe that the nature of their own identity through time is, somehow, such as to guarantee that...questions about their identity must have answers. This belief might be expressed as follows: 'Whatever happens between now and any future time, either I shall still exist, or I shall not. Any future experience will either be my experience or it will not'". [3]

So here we have the problem that if I am a person P1 at a time T1 and if at a later time T2 there is a person P2 who, in the judgement of expert investigators and reliable witnesses, satisfies all the usual criteria for being the same person as P1, then I might or might not really be that person. Now this is a very difficult idea to grasp, even if it seemed fairly obvious before we started thinking about it, but the problem can be highlighted at the expense of introducing a complication into our notion that a person P1 might be reincarnated as a person P2 who is really the same person as P1.

Let us imagine that investigators have satisfied themselves that there are good grounds for believing that P2 is a reincarnation of P1. Let us further imagine that it is then discovered that an entirely independent series of hypnotic sessions has established that a third person, P3, has an equally good claim to be a reincarnation of P1. What could we say about such a situation? There would appear to be four possibilities:.

1. neither P2 nor P3 are reincarnations of P1.
2. P2 is a reincarnation of P1.
3. P3 is a reincarnation of P1.
4. P2 and P3 are reincarnations of P1.

If we accepted option 2. before P3 came into the picture, we will have trouble in finding a good reason for now going for option 1. If we still accept option 2., or if we change our minds and go for option 3., then we must state our reasons for deciding between these apparently conflicting claims in such a way that our choice will not seem to be entirely arbitrary. It might seem a good idea then to go for option 4. We can say that both P2 and P3 remember a previous life as P1 and that the available evidence supports their claims (thus fulfilling John Locke's criteria for identity of 'persons'). Thus it is reasonable to assume that P2 is the same person as P1, and P3 is the same person as P1, although we have to

Continued on page 14

Robert Rankin's GREAT MYSTERIES of BRENTFORD

No. 23 THE GRYPHON

Throughout history the gryphon has been a symbol evocative of power and majesty. As an emblem it is employed by nearly 200 companies in the UK alone, from the Midland Bank to Fuller's Brewery. Jung once stated that "it is a subconscious symbol of such encompassment that it is unlikely to be the product of mere myth; we are dealing with something born from folk memory."

Although a seemingly impossible hybrid of eagle and lion, there now appears little doubt that the gryphon is a living reality. Up until a few months ago zoologists would have ridiculed the possibility of such a chimera, but the recent spate of sightings coupled with the gryphon skeleton currently on exhibit, seems to have added the flesh of reality to the bones of myth.

"I went along suspecting hoax", stated Attenborough "but came away convinced. This discovery has set the zoological world upon its heels."

Reports of gryphons crop up with startling regularity throughout the pages of history. Dr. Johnson records one he saw at Brentford's Bull Fayre:

"...it was somewhat smaller than I had expected, but the proprietor assured me that it was 'yet young'... It had the body of a lion cub and the neck, head and forelegs of an eagle... curiously formed wings issued from its shoulders."

Johnson was in no doubt that the besat lived "and was not the product of the gypsies' craft". No further mention of is made of the gryphon in his writings, and one is left to wonder what became of it.

Possibly it was the same live specimen my father saw at Olympia before the war. He was informed that it was several hundred years old and was shown old showman's posters as proof.

From the substantial body of information I have on my own files alone, I am inclined to place the Brentford Gryphon alongside the Yeti and the Loch Ness Monster 'as yet unsolved'.

The local sightings have been too widely reported to require further mention here, and I have no cause to doubt the testimony



of the witnesses I have interviewed. Having been scrupulous in discopunting sightings which might be misinterpretations of natural phenomena, we are still left with statements such as "unlike any living creature I have seen...", "rising from the Thames on outspread wings...", "the front half looked like an eagle, I saw a long tail and claws like a cat."

London Weekend Television's 'spooft send-up' on 15th March fell flat on its face, with Cockney 'personality' Danny Baker openly admitting before an audience of several million that the witnesses he had interviewed were genuine. Such unprecedented honesty on his part seemed more than at odds with LWT's obvious intention to send the whole thing up.

Since the television coverage Brentford has found itself playing reluctant host to all manner of fringe elements. Andy Collins of 'Green Stone' notoriety arrived hotfoot, with ghetto-blasters, Instamatic and the usual bevy of nubile lady acolytes. Viewpoint Aquarius stated that it was a 'genetic mutation'

escaped from a government establishment, and the Chiswick Wildlife Trust offered the considered opinion that it was nothing more than a four-legged vulture blown off course!

In fact speculation on all sides led to such an astonishing plethora of 'logical explanations' (the logic of which defies all explanation) that one is left to consider the indisputable fact that it is a gryphon pure and simple - a species of animal as yet unstudied and therefore considered non-existent.

One can certainly discount John Rimmer's recent 'authoritative article' which suggests that it is Brentford's old friend the giant feral Tom, making yet another of its unwelcome nocturnal appearances. Mr Rimmer would do well to explain how the famous 5 foot pussy manages to grow upwards of 8 foot, sprout wings and fly across the Thames.

I note with growing alarm the plan of some local stalwarts to instigate a gryphon hunt one night in the near future. I hear talk of a flotilla of small boats, tracker dogs, powerful searchlights, steel nets and tranquillising darts. The plucky Brentonians would do well to exercise extreme caution, as the beast is notorious for its ferocity and love of human flesh. It is my feeling that the matter should be placed in the hands of the experts. But I am sure also that it will require private backing, as the local council has shown its customary reticence in raising the necessary funds, even for so worthy a cause.

Whatever the eventual outcome, I cannot contain the thrill that rises at the prospect of a successful capture. Such would be a rare achievement indeed. I look forward with great interest to future developments.

Magonia welcomes any correspondence on this interesting subject, and is eager to contact anyone who has had a personal experience with a gryphon or any other form of creature previously believed to be mythical.

Science of ufology from page 10

d. Establish a clearly defined social role for ufologists, make sure new members are properly trained, and restrict recruitment to those who wish to treat the subject as a science, rather than a hobby or entertainment.

Of course, ufologists may not wish to attempt to become acceptable to orthodox science by adopting the above procedures of institutionalisation and professionalisation. Instead they may wish to attempt to change science in some way, and it could be argued that the best way to achieve this is by opposing orthodoxy.

Reincarnation - from page 12

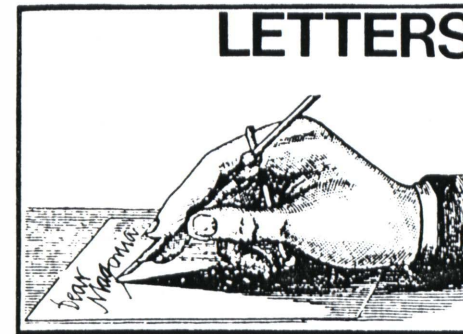
concede (although some philosophers would not agree) that P2 is not the same person as P3.

It is a very wierd situation, but we can learn to live with it. However, remembering the discussion in the previous paragraphs, we then have to ask ourselves: "What if I were P1; would I be reincarnated as P2 or P3?" Could I be both? It seems not. Let us imagine that as P1 I am told by a great wizard that I am going to be reincarnated as two people at the same time and that one of these persons, P", will have a happy life and the other, P3, will have a miserable life. I would then be inclined to say: "I hope I shall be P2". If I am P2 then I cannot be P3. Logically, it seems like tossing a coin; the result can be heads or tails, but not both at the same time.

It is possible to introduce any number of further complications into our philosophical speculations about the meaning of the concept of reincarnation, which would take us even further away from the simple concept of a person having a series of consecutive lives in a succession of bodies, but some people may insist that such problems do not arise in reality and that it never happens that more than one person seriously claims to have been a particular person in the past, and that past lifetimes which are recalled never overlap. It would be indeed interesting to know whether or not such complications ever occur and, if so, what kinds of explanations are put forward to account for them. If accounts of reincarnation are simply an artefact of the human mind, it would need very detailed historical knowledge on the part of the subject who recalls a number of past lives to avoid any overlapping.

The foregoing discussion has only scratched the surface of this particular philosophical issue. For example, it has been tacitly based on the idea of personal identity as being 'all or nothing', rather than being, as some philosophers argue, a matter of degree. However, I think I have said enough to demonstrate that arguments about reincarnation are hardly likely to be settled by mere facts! We must try to agree on what we mean by this concept before we can know exactly what it is we are going to argue about. Obviously, this will be no easy task.

REFERENCES: 1. SHOEMAKER, Sidney and SWINBURNE, Richard. *Personal Identity*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, p. 8. 2. LOCKE, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, xxvii, 15. 3. PARFIT, Derek. *Personal Identity*, in GLOVER, Jonathan (ed.) *The Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1976, p.142.



Dear John Rimmer,

I would like to make a few points regarding your magazine and its roots. When you and your colleagues ceased to be "starry-eyed flying saucer freaks" and became serious (and dessicated) experts in comparative sociology and transpersonal psychological methodology, you used the terms and, incidentally, nearly deified the book that Vallee churned out in 1970. You seem obsessed with using Vallee's work as your baseline. I take it this is because he is/was a serious scientist. You all act as though *Passport to Magonia* was the first breakthrough into the mythico/psychological dimension in UFO literature. Now this mediocre yet interesting littel book is based upon the work of three giants of what might best be termed mythico-ufology, Brinsley le Poer Trench (Lord Clancarty), W. Raymond Drake, and of course John Michell. These three key researchers do not get a lot of mention in *Magonia*. In fact *Passport to Magonia* is only a poor man's version of John Michell's incandescent and illuminating *The Flying Saucer Vision*, which appeared in 1967!

Valle must have been aware of this seminal work when he threw together *Passport to Magonia*, yet he makes no reference to it anywhere in the main book or in the references. Equally, W. Raymond Drake's work, which began official publication from the Ray Palmer stable in 1964, *Gods or Spacemen* (Amhurst Press) gets no mention, yet its ethos is strongly felt in Vallee's whimsical musings on certain 'cases'.

In fact poor Drake was writing von Daniken type material six years before *Charlots of the Gods*, yet because it was infinitely better researched (and handled) he languished in obscurity and never became a millionaire! Brinsley wrote the key UFO-Earth Mysteries link book *Men Among Mankind* (Neville Spearman) in 1962. *Passport to Magonia* in 1970 was not fresh and new, it was merely part

of almost a decade of previous mythico-ufological research. This was not credited in Vallee's book, and is never mentioned in the pages of your magazine.

Now I am sure you are aware of these three seminal works; why, you probably have them in your library. I would like to suggest you take them down now and again, blow the dust and cobwebs off, and have a good look at the nature of their content. This would be excellent therapy for Mr Rogerson as well.

Vallee has admittedly done some valid work since 1970, particularly *Messengers of Deception*, but he was not the first to gaze into the crystal well in search of what I term geomorphic reality. Your magazine would be far better balanced in its studies if it was more consciously aware of the more Poetically mythical roots of its concerns. In the transcendent concept of burgeoning Cosmic Consciousness, Blake was a better 'scientist' than Newton. Work that one out!

Yours in icy fraternity

Anthony Roberts
Glastonbury.

Dear John

In *Magonia* 18, Peter Rogerson makes a defence of the review column and comes up with some numbers to prove it is not an 'axe column'. It may be so, but it gives the reader the impression that all books that do not agree with some ill defined editorial policy, or worse, with the views of the reviewer, are bad by definition. I cannot subscribe to that, and it seems to me that a review should be a balanced critique of the contents of a book, not a systematic listing of its flaws and shortcomings.

Best Regards

Willy Smith,
Longwood, Florida.

Dear Mr Rimmer

I was interested to read the article by Nigel Watson, Ian Cresswell and Granville Oldroyd about the 'Liverpool Leprechauns'. Like you, I do not remember this incident in the sixties, but I do recall a very similar case dating from the mid 1920's.

The story spread that the figure of a phantom soldier was to be seen in front of the War Memorial in the public gardens in Shaw Street, just on the edge of the city centre. The soldier was supposed to appear in a sort of glowing cloud, and walked to and fro by the monument.

Crowds of people turned out day after day at sunset to try to see the figure. The crowds got so big that the street was impassable and the police had to divert the traffic.

In this case the panic was not confined to youngsters, and most of the crowd were adults. I am not sure of the exact date of these events, but Messrs. Watson, Cresswell and Oldroyd may care to check it out when next searching the news files.

Mrs M. Tyrer, West Derby, Liverpool.

Dear Mr Rimmer,

Thank you for my first copy of *Magonia*. I had not realised that you covered such a variety of subjects. I enjoyed Roger Sandell's article on Nostradamus. Fontbrune has another book out now, which seems just as bad (see Reviews - Ed.). I suppose this type of book will flourish whilst we approach that 'significant' year 2000.

Brian Burgess, Chester.

Dear John,

I was interested that Roger Sandell, in his review of *Sky Crash* picked out the sighting by Brenda Butler of an object "as big as a football" over the airbase one morning (p.187). It just so happens that this was the same night that I visited the site with the BBC film crew. We saw the same UFO. In fact it chased our car back to London!

From my own observations I can assure you that the size of the UFO as reported by Brenda is a considerable understatement. The me, the brilliant light looked to be about 7,500 miles in diameter. I would estimate its distance at about 45 million miles. Need I add that Venus was then at its brightest in the morning sky? Of course, no reliable UFO investigator would ever make the basic mistake of reporting Venus as a UFO.

Sincerely,

Ian Ridpath, Brentford.

Dear Sir,

Heaven knows, the columns of *Magonia* are not the place for word-chopping polemic. If I respond to Stuart Campbell's letter (your issues 18) it is because I also believe the columns of *Magonia* are not the place where high-handed presumption should be allowed to be got away with.

In his para. 3, Stuart says "There are no UFOs". Unless I misunderstand these words, they are the equivalent of 'No flying objects exist which are not identified'. But this is so patently untrue (See Corliss *Sourcebooks*, passim) that he must mean something else.

In his previous paragraph, he asserts that "granted...adequate information or adequate investigation...all UFO reports would be found to be IFO reports". Again, unless I misunderstand these words, they are the equivalent of 'If sufficient was known about the objects reported, their nature would be known' which is so self-evident a tautology that again, surely he must mean something else.

An indication of what he really means comes when, moving on, we find his saying "I claim that the evidence exists already to conclude that UFOs (as alien craft) do not exist". We note that he has now shifted from UFOs per se to 'UFOs as alien craft'. His conclusion is one which many of us will share; but few of us, I fancy, would rate high his chances of proving his negative proposition, a task from which Kevin McClure (p.3 col. 1) understandably shrinks.

Evidently, however, Stuart feels that proof can be dispensed with; in his final paragraph we find his private opinion presented as a statement of fact - "Because there are no UFOs" - a piece of question-begging breath-taking in its presumption.

For Stuart to conclude such a display of verbal legerdemain by giving us his opinion that Jenny Randles is in danger of losing her grip on reality is the sheerest insolence.

Hilary Evans, Blackheath.

Dear John Rimmer

It is all very well for Kevin McClure to wield Occam's Razor and to pretend that he has cut out unreasonable hypotheses (as explanations for alleged psychic phenomena), but in fact he is not the skilled surgeon that he believes himself to be. The least unreasonable hypothesis to explain alleged psychic phenomena (for which everyone agrees there is no objective evidence) is not that they must be the result of innate human abilities (rather than the influence of external agencies), it is that the phenomena do not exist! Considering that the Razor requires the least number of assumptions, it is perverse to assume 'a very wide range of psi and ESP abilities'. There is no justification for this great assumption; the simplest assumption is that the people who claim the existence of such phenomena and abilities are either mistaken, or frauds. There have been enough examples of both mistakes and fraud for this hypothesis to be taken seriously, and until there is evidence that cannot be explained in this way the null hypothesis must be regarded as the true explanation. Sorry to spoil a good story!

Steuart Campbell, Edinburgh.

DEEPER INTO THE FOREST

RENDLESHAM CONTINUED

Willy Smith and Roger Sandell

IT IS regrettable that some who write reviews and/or critiques of books and papers do not take the proper care to read thoroughly the work they intend to analyse, either for lack of time (the charitable version) or because their animosity to the topic or the authors leads them to extract only those parts that fit their confessed or unconfessed bias (the vindictive version). The net result is that the commentary becomes a piece of disinformation, not helping the authors to see their own weaknesses, and deceiving the potential readers about the value - or lack thereof - of the work under consideration. What prompted these thoughts is the review of *Sky Crash* by Roger Sandell that appeared in the previous issue of *Magonia* [1].

"First of all", as Mr Sandell begins, it is true that the central theme of the book is the possibility of a high-level conspiracy surrounding the incidents in Rendlesham Forest. What is not so true is that the authors, "assiduous in finding evidence for the cover-up", are trying to force their conclusions on the reader. On the contrary, as Mr Sandell should have noted in the preface (p.5), the authors say, verbatim [2]:

We may be right or we may be wrong. We have no vested interest in anything other than the truth, and this book merely provides the means for you to decide what the truth may be.

Of the eighteen eyewitnesses listed, Mr Sandell has singled out two for comments: Charles Halt and 'Art Wallace'. About the first, "he refused to be buttonholed by the authors in his house at 11 o'clock at night". I imagine this comment pertains to the events of 23rd February 1984, and had Mr. Sandell read the last chapter of *Sky Crash* (p.269), he could not have failed to recognise the marks of a setup, although Butler and Street brought this upon themselves for being naive. The reasons for Colonel Halt proceeding in that manner may be inany and complex, but they are not relevant. What is relevant is that otherwise the authors are lying. Is that the message that Mr. Sandell is subtly transmitting?

As for 'Art Wallace', true enough he seems to talk like a character in a B-movie. But so what? He is young, presumably uneducated, and probably talks in that fashion all the time. In my view a sophisticated vocabulary on Wallace's lips would have made him totally suspect. There are, however, reasons to distrust his testimony, but certainly not because of his speech patterns.

The authors did not conclude, as Mr Sandell wants us to believe, that the promotion of the officers was a reward for their silence. The point is that in the military those who do not follow established policy and/or make mistakes are committing professional suicide. Three of the high-ranking officers in the Rendlesham episode (Col. Charles Halt, General Ted Conrad and Brigadier General Gordon Williams) have been promoted. Hence, whatever they did had an official blessing, and their connection with the case and their conduct must be examined in that light.

As for Occam's Razor, it has nothing to do with the 'sinister' or 'mundane' characteristics of an explanation, but rather its simplicity. If the authors indicate that a witnesses seemed to be frightened I am willing to accept this simple assessment from those who had direct contact with them rather than remote and convoluted reasons for their behaviour hatched by someone who was not there.

Again Mr. Sandell tells us that "there is no real evidence that he was even in the US Air Force". Wrong again, Mr Sandell. Go and look on page 233, or better, read the whole book and find the several confirmations from various sources that 'Wallace' was indeed in the USAF during the critical period.

With reference to the radiation readings, they are mentioned explicitly in the Halt memorandum, including values of exposure in milliroentgens. As a copy of this memoran-

dum is in *Sky Crash*, the statement that "we are given no data to evaluate their significance" is empty and in error.

We read on page 82 that "animals do not suffer hallucinations and if they do respond to something strange it is safe to assume that something strange really is happening". This statement seems to perturb Mr. Sandell extremely, and one wonders if he has some documentary evidence that animals in fact do hallucinate. He refers us to Allan Hendry's well-known handbook [3] where in fact we find (p.160) a word of caution in establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between the presence of a UFO and animal behavior. But it doesn't imply in any way that such a relationship does not exist, and moreover, Allan's comments refer almost exclusively to domestic animals, not to cattle. More importantly, Allan Hendry does not provide us with a single clue as to whether animals hallucinate, which was the point that we were trying to resolve. Come on, Mr. Sandell, don't you ever read any books before quoting them?

As for the 'ideas' of Ian Ridpath attempting to explain the incident with a moving lighthouse [4], the less one says the kinder one will be. However, what cannot be condoned is the doctoring of TV footage by using a zoom lens to make the lighthouse look like a glowing object, and by editing the dark pauses that would have given the game away. This is pure deception, and I wonder how the British audience of 'Breakfast TV' took it, although I know what would have happened in America to the prestige of such a programme. Well, I believe Mr. Ridpath sympathises with CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), and his reputation will not be damaged any further by this faux-pas than it is already by his association with this group, whose members have not hesitated, on more than one occasion to distort the truth when it disagrees with their avowed purpose.

It is useless to continue, as I believe that I have made my point, i.e. that the critic left himself quite open to criticism by reading only superficially the book he was supposed to discuss. It is not my intent to write a review of *Sky Crash*, but having gone this far, I think I am entitled to express my opinion.

This book is what it portrays itself to be: a presentation of the information collected by the authors over an extended period of time with reference to the incidents in the Rendlesham Forest. It includes a detailed list of military and civilian witnesses (firsthand and incidental), impressions gathered

during the different stages of the investigation, official documents (like the Halt memorandum), as well as several possibilities (other than UFOs) that could explain the occurrences. But it is up to the reader to draw his own conclusions. It is an interesting piece of research which indeed has some flaws, but not those that Roger Sandell has pounced on.

REFERENCES: 1. SANDELL, Roger. 'Down in the Forest Something Stirred...', *Magonia*, no. 18, January 1985, p.18. 2. BUTLER, STREET and RANDES. *Sky Crash, a Cosmic Conspiracy*, Spearman, 1984. 3. HENDRY, Allan. *UFO Handbook*, Doubleday & Co., 1979. 4. RIDPATH, Ian. 'An Explanation of the Woodbridge UFO', *Magonia*, no. 14, 1983.

Roger Sandell replies:

DR. SMITH is indeed entitled to his opinions, and I do take the points he raises seriously, especially since, unlike most angry reactions to *Magonia* book reviews, his letter does not come from an outraged author with an axe to grind. However, I am still not convinced that I have been unfair. To take some specific points:

1. I did not express any doubts about the authors' honesty, since I do not feel any. I made it clear that the authors provide data which permits readers to come to different conclusions. In any case, regular readers will know that *Magonia* reviewers do not engage in innuendo but, when they consider an author to be dishonest clearly say so (*Vide* Fontbrune, *Magonia*, *passim*.)

2. I am aware that the book does give figures for radiation; I merely stated that no data necessary to evaluate these figures were given. Knowing nothing about radiation, I did not know whether the amounts in question are or are not a significant deviation from normal. Having read Dr. Smith's letter I still don't.

3. On the subsequent promotion of Rendlesham officers, I certainly understood the authors to imply that this was a move to silence them. If I am wrong I can only point out that the *MUFON Journal* in a highly favourable review, also interprets the book as making that claim.

4. The statement on page 82 concerning animals hallucinating struck me as so manifestly absurd I left it to make its own impression on the reader. Perhaps Dr. Smith would indicate any way we could find out whether or not animals hallucinate. Tests of animal brain activity certainly suggests that they dream. Further, I have no idea what the term 'strange' means in this context. UFO reports are strange to us because there appears to be no obvious explanation for some of them. To an animal even the most spectacular close-

encounter would merely be a bright, noisy object, similar to a plane or car.

5. Concerning 'Art Wallace', the evidence for his presence at the base did not strike me as impressive. However Ian Ridpath tells me that the person using this pseudonym was in fact present at the time of the events in questions, so I stand corrected. However, the significant thing about his use of melodramatic clichés, as I should probably have made clearer, is not that he used them to express his own feelings, but that he put these B-movie phrases into the mouths of his superiors who he claimed were silencing him by death threats. In assessing his credibility, I would note that, since Ian Ridpath knows who 'Wallace' is, the USAF presumably does as well, but no dire consequences seem to have ensued.

6. I do not accept that I had suggested any "remote and convoluted reasons" for the silence of local witnesses. I leave it to readers whether it is more reasonable to suggest other commitments or aversion to publicity as a reason for witnesses' reluctance to be interviewed, before postulating official cover-ups.

While on the subject of cover-ups I can only trust that if, as is suggested, the British government is involved in this cover-up, whoever is responsible will shortly be promoted since their efforts have been much more successful than the recent inept efforts to suppress facts concerning the sinking of the *General Belgrano* and M15 phone-tapping.

7. I was not aware that Ian Ridpath was linked with the CSICOP. I would certainly be critical of some of the methods and conclusions of this organisation, but I would reject the guilt by association that Dr. Smith engages in. One cannot lump peoples' ideas on different subjects into a package, to take or leave in this way. For instance, while I reject the conclusions of *Sky Crash*, I still feel that Jenny Randles' *Northern UFO News* is a valuable source of investigations; and I imagine that while Dr. Smith approves of *Sky Crash* he would not share Jenny Randles' belief in astrology or Nostradamus.

I must confess I also find it puzzling that after implying that Jenny Randles' view of the witnesses is more valuable than mine, since I have not seen them, he is so quick to dismiss Ian Ridpath who, unlike him, has been to Rendlesham.

I would close with some wider observations. *Sky Crash* is labelled on the cover as being about "a cosmic conspiracy" and the jacket claims that it tells the story of "the world's first officially confirmed landing and contact". Later we read suggestions that the US government may be in regular contact

with extraterrestrials. These are extraordinary claims that require extraordinary evidence, and when they are made it is surely responsible to consider alternative explanations, especially when one looks at the way some UFO cause celebres have disintegrated over the years.

I am especially alarmed by the readiness of some associated with the case to attribute bad faith or participation in a 'cover-up'. A very serious example is the claim made by Jenny Randles in a recent *Northern UFO News* that a recent book sceptical about the case was under government sponsorship.

This, it would seem, is a reference to William Porter's *Lies, Damn Lies and Some Exclusives*, a book on contemporary popular journalism that, as I mentioned last issue, includes criticism of the *News of the World's* treatment of Rendlesham. Anyone who has actually read this book would find this suggestion ludicrous since a large part of it deals with press misrepresentation of the peace movement, pro-Conservative press bias in the 1983 election and ministerial attempt to manipulate the press. Hardly the sort of thing I can see the present government sponsoring.

Such tactics may have been alright for the late Senator McCarthy (or the current editor of *FSR*) but those who retail such baseless and unsubstantiated smears can hardly be surprised if others find such methods do not inspire confidence.

In the review of *Sky Crash* which engendered this controversy, we inadvertently, during preparation of paste-ups for the printers, omitted to give bibliographical details of the book. We apologise for this, and any inconvenience (and conspiracy theorising) it may have caused. The book *Sky Crash*, by Brenda Butler, Dot Street and Jenny Randles, is published by Neville Spearman, Ltd.; price £7.50.

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THE NIGEL WATSON COLUMN



'CLOSE Encounters of the Third Kind', Steven Spielberg's stunning film about flying saucers and man's first contact with alien entities, was first shown in November 1977. Within a week it had begun to smash box-office records across America...

The most influential science fiction film before *Close Encounters*... was undoubtedly Stanley Kubrick's *2001, A Space Odyssey* which was released in 1968. In his treatment of the first contact Kubrick shows that it occurs in the future, 'on' a distant planet; and involves a highly-trained astronaut. In contrast, Spielberg brought the first contact literally down to earth, in our present time, and shows that even the common man can be involved. Furthermore he used the 'real' experiences of people who have claimed sightings and contact with flying saucers as the foundation of his script.

The extent to which Spielberg owes a debt to the UFO literature is shown by the fact that he used Dr. J Allen Hynek - a former UFO consultant for the USAF - as his technical advisor. In addition, he based the character of Claude Lacombe (played by Francois Truffaut) on the UFO author and computer expert, Jacques Vallee.

All this effort was no doubt made to show that 'this could happen to you'. Indeed:

The films realism is designed to bring the audience as close as possible to an event that could be the most momentous of our time. [1]

To reinforce this realism the film starts almost like a fly-on-the-wall documentary. This is most evident in the scene where in the claustrophobic atmosphere of an American air traffic control centre a UFO is tracked on radar.

Also, the very beginning of the film, when five World War II Avenger aircraft are found in the middle of a sandstorm is totally incomprehensible unless you already know about the disappearance of Flight 19, publicised in the best-selling book *The Bermuda Triangle* by Charles Berlitz. Spielberg knew that millions of UFO believers in America would be attracted to his film, and his bank account alone showed he was right.

The manipulation of human fears and fantasies is a favourite technique of Spielberg's. In his first (made for television) feature film *Duel* he shows how the wit and intellect of a mild-mannered motorist can overcome the menace of a homicidal tanker driver. Although random human evil can be beaten, the power of the state and society to crush the dreams of youth come into full force in *Sugarland Express*; whilst *Jaws* expresses our tenuous mastery over nature.

Like *Sugarland Express*, *Close Encounters*... portrays flight from reality taken to extreme. However there is a price to pay for transcending the boundaries of consensus reality and social conformity, in both films. In the former, happiness is gunned down by the forces of law and order, whilst in the latter the UFO seeker, Roy Neary, loses his wife and children as a consequence of his belief. Similarly the family life of the police officer in *Jaws* is disrupted due to his obsession about the danger of the shark when no-one else is concerned.

Also, it is worth noting that the physically puny aliens in *Close Encounters*... are able to use a powerful technology take care of us, just as in the earlier, just as in the earlier films physically puny man is able to employ technology to threaten and control humanity and the natural world.

Spielberg, throughout his films, shows the situation from the point of view of the ordinary citizen. The characters are fallible, vulnerable, and distinctly ordinary until events prove otherwise. To highlight this even more he uses children to great effect. It is interesting to see that H. G. Wells usually put ordinary people into extraordinary situations. Also, Wells was one of the first to speculate that man in future would evolve into nothing more than a bloated brain. [2] Likewise, Spielberg's aliens have much bigger brains than ourselves.

Close Encounters... can be seen as a reply to Wells's 1897 novel, *War of the Worlds*. But this time Spielberg hopes that mentally advanced aliens will try to help mankind rather than blast him with heat rays. And he shows that mankind is (just) mature enough not to try to blast the aliens back to the stars as he attempted to do

He shows that mankind is (just)
mature enough not to try
to blast the aliens back
to the stars

in the 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. In that film the occupants of the flying saucer have to seek out the ordinary American citizen to discover the truth about humanity since the White House only generates aggression and bureaucracy. Spielberg reveals a similar distrust of the government when it is shown to be publicly ridiculing UFOs whilst carrying out a secret operation to meet the aliens. However, their plans are undermined by those who are 'mentally' informed of the location of the proposed encounter site. In the post-Watergate period such government dirty tricks were to be expected, but at least one of the UFO seekers wins a trip to the stars. The message is that the individual can still beat the Government if he is determined enough.

Images in the film are also borrowed and transformed. In one of the most frightening scenes when the energy of a UFO sends the domestic appliances of a house into a frenzied dance, the screws of a floor grating menacingly unwind themselves from the fitting. In the 1952 film version of *The War of the Worlds* the unwinding of the hatch on the first Martian space vehicle

serves the same purpose by terrifying the viewer with the idea of what might leap into view. Even the vast starship occupied by Spielberg's aliens can be compared to the flying island of Laputa in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, or the vast aerial cities envisaged by Hugo Gernsback. [3]

Although the aliens seem to have peaceful intentions, the antics of their small flying saucers and blobs of light are mischievous. They give Roy Neary a suntan; they cause power cuts; send police cars on a wild-goose chase (just as the people in *Summerland Express* did); and fly in formations which duplicate stellar constellation patterns. These activities remind us of the fairy literature which contains many stories of the will o' the wisp lights which in times past led travellers into the bog, or played similar pranks on unsuspecting people. Such a link is not surprising when it is considered that Jacques Vallee in his book *Passport to Magonia* showed the connection between fairy legends and contemporary UFO reports. No doubt Spielberg was well aware of this book's contents.

Other sources of inspiration seem to be Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* from which the song 'When You Wish Upon a Star' was lifted for the end credits of *Close Encounters* [4]. If Jimminy Cricket represents our super ego, the aliens represent a galactic super ego that will prompt us to conform to more peaceful and rewarding patterns of behaviour; whilst a Bugs Bunny cartoon featuring 'Martin the Martian' is even included in the film to highlight the old 'war of the worlds' mentality towards alien invaders.

As a means of illustrating the world-wide nature of the UFO phenomenon scenes were shot in India, but the aliens select an area of America as their landing zone, and Americans appear to be in charge of selecting those who meet them. American jingoism even spreads to the stars.

To indicate that the aliens have been watching us throughout history, a selection of people dressed in a variety of historical costumes march out of the starship. These people, who include the pilots of Flight 19, have all been reported as going missing in mysterious circumstances. *Close Encounters* shows the aliens abducting them, we are not told why.

The ability to manipulate our minds and our history implies that the aliens have a god-like power over us. This is reinforced by the cathedral-like appearance of the gigantic starship. It bathes the aliens in a halo of light as they emerge, and it blast out 'music' more powerful than any cathedral organ.

The starship represents the Second Coming salvation from the stars will save us from our own evil and corrupt ways. In the novelisation of the film, a priest chants to the departing humans and aliens:

By the guidance of a star, grant these pilgrims, we pray, a happy journey and peaceful days so that with Your divine angel as their guide they may reach their destination and finally come to the haven of everlasting salvation. God, who led Your servant Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and kept him safe in all his wanderings, may it please You, we pray, also to watch over these servants of Yours... [5]

Whether we believe or not that guiding angels can save us from ourselves, and despite any reservations we might have about such a message, the overall effect of the film's sound and vision is such that Spielberg has created a good substitute for the real thing [6]. *Close Encounters* shows that fiction can become fact 'When You Wish Upon a Star' and have the cinematic talents of Steven Spielberg to help the wish along. **11**

NOTES AND REFERENCES: 1. 'We Are Not Alone', a 1978 Columbia/EMI publicity handout, p.1. 2. WELLS, H. G., 'The Man of the Year Million', *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 1893. Reproduced in *The H G Wells Scrapbook*, edited by Peter Haining, NEL, London 1978. 3. As illustrated in *Science and Invention*, February 1922. Reproduced in part on the front cover of *Magonia* 17. 4. According to Bob Balaban in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind Diary* (Paradise Press, 1978) this was dropped after unfavourable comment. 5. SPIELBERG, Steven *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Sphere, London, 1978. 6. That is acted as a surrogate experience is reflected in the fact that there was a significant decrease in UFO reports after the film's release.

Maniac - continued from page 6.
article I find I'm pondering on whether the tale I heard on the Circle Line a few weeks since truly was a bit of promising foalflore. Can we honestly discredit the existence of the Maniac on the Platform? I've already confessed that in logical terms we can't, because you cannot discredit a story whose underlying plot dictates that the central character will never actually appear in person.

Just the same, I don't think I want to believe in him. I prefer him as foalflore, not as a reincarnation of Jack the Ripper's Even Nastier Brother.

And I shall go on using the Underground, ears flapping for variants on the Maniac's homicidal misdoings while I hum beneath my breath the old Jam classic: "Don't wanna go down in Tube stations at midnight..."

JOURNAL REVIEWS



AFU Newsletter 27, 1984. This excellent Swedish (but English-language) UFO newsletter has been coming out increasingly sporadically recently, now we learn that it will close down for a few years whilst the editors concentrate on research. The farewell issue is as good as ever with more on Scandinavian ghost rockets; the bizarre 'Helge' contact case; notes on ufology in Russia; as well as reviews and a long editorial on the future direction of AFU's work. Sadly missed.

Anomaly. [Undated] The first, experimental, issue of ASSAP's new journal of research. Articles by Paul Devereux, giving a rather less polemical exposition than previously, on earthlights; a summary of ASSAP's investigations over the past year; and short comments by various ASSAP officials. A very promising, well-produced, predominantly investigation-based journal.

Fortean Times. No. 43. The first issue under the acting editorship of Paul Sieveking keeps up the improvement noted in the past few issues, with plenty of up-to-date fortetan news and stimulating discussion thereon. Hopefully we have seen the back of the sick, paranoid conspiracy/mutilation syndrome which marred some recent issues. Excellent pieces on Cottingly Fairies, horned humans, Columbus, and an elegant jeu d'esprit on the York Minster conflagration by John Michel. £6.00 four issues, from FT, 96 Mansfield Rd., London, NW3 2HX.

MUFON UFO Journal. January 1985. Continuing its curiously erratic path, MUFON UFO Journal combines routine reports, the occasional stimulating article, and a great deal of boring material which serves to highlight the sad state of American ufology, which seems stuck in the depths of inter-group bickering that disfigured British ufology five or six years back. Still however essential reading for anyone wanting to keep up-to-date with the US UFO scene. 103 Oldtowne Road, Seguin, Texas.

Northern UFO News. No. 112, March 1985. Good basic case summaries mixed with personal, often ideosyncratic, comments on the UFO scene by editor Jenny Randles. This issue reviews critical reactions to *Sky Crash*, with a smack for *Magonia's* "very negative pro-lighthouse" comments. Bi-monthly, £5.40 p.a. from Jenny Randles, 8 Whitethroat Walk, Warrington, WA3 6PQ.

Pogonip. No. 1. A new French fortetan magazine, with particular emphasis on phantom animal and 'whale tumour' stories. Articles on press treatment of sensational stories. A section of 'modern mythologies' looks at a vision of the Virgin Mary near Saint-Etienne, phantom hitch-hikers in Vendée, and rumours of the release of snakes by ecologists. Plus, three cases of mystery felines, fortetan clippings and lake monster of Quebec. You all know what a Pogonip is, don't you? By exchange, or 12F. p.a. from editor J.L. Brodu, B.P. 15667, PARIS Cedex 14, France. An excellent new magazine for all francophones, which deserves your support.

S.P.R. Journal. October 1984. No. 798. An intriguing reader's letter describing "sentient lights" seen over Papa Stour, Shetland, in 1915/16. An account of a poltergeist in Kern City, California which the author thinks indicates the presence of a discarnate personality. Little in the way of persuasive evidence to convince the non-survivalist, it seems to me. An article criticising the term 'ESP', of minimal interest. W. E. Cox of minilab fame slates magicians who oppose psi; Serena Roney-Dougal on a questionnaire on occultists attitudes to ESP.

The Shaman. No. 9, January 1985. Incorporating 'Ancient Skills and Wisdom Review' (one ancient skill was obviously not handling a duplicator), continues its erratic (not to mention erotic) course. No. 9 looks at Sun page three girls in relationship to the naming of diesel locomotives; memories of an eccentric contemporary shaman; reviews and notes. Paul Screeton's individualistic hobby-horse usually gives an entertaining ride. £2.00 (four issues) from 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT.

UFO Research Australia Newsletter. September-October 1984. Interesting account of Australia's first (?) abduction case; notes on car-stoppage cases; Keith Basterfield on hypnogogic imagery; Joaquim Fernandes discussing Fatima; notes and reviews, including a sympathetic but balanced view of *Sky Crash*. A well produced and presented journal of serious UFO research. \$ Aust. 18.00 from Vladimic Godic, PO Box 229, Prospect, South Australia 5082.



BOOK REVIEWS

BOOKS WANTED

Entries in this column are free to subscribers.

WEBB, James. *The Flight From Reason.* Please state total price. WRITE TO: Eileen Ambrose, c/o Magonia, 64 Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4JW.

Single volumes or sets of 18th & 19th cent. 'wonder' material, such as 'The Wonderful Magazine & Marvellous Chronicle' [Smeeton]; 'The Wonderful & Scientific Museum' [Granger]. Send full details & price to Bob Skinner, Cobgates, Falkner Road, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7HG.

UNDERWOOD, Peter. *The Ghost Hunters; who they are & what they do.* Hale, 1985. £9.95.

An amiable and generally uncritical reminiscence of twentieth-century psychic researchers, from Harry Price to Andrew MacKenzie. The subjects of most of the profiles seem to have been old 'Ghost Club' buddies of Underwood, so it is understandable that sceptical assessments of their work are ignored or, particularly in the case of Price, very lightly dismissed. The world of the 'ghost-hunter' once again comes across as a pleasant little club of terribly civilised upper-middle-class people on country weekends. Still, the *Gloucestershire Echo* thinks well of it; but at £9.95 for a pretty lightweight (in both senses) volume, I feel it's probably destined for the remainder shops. **J.R.**

FONTBRUNE, Jean-Charles de. *Nostradamus: into the Twenty-first Century.* Hutchinson, 1985.

It takes a large amount of nerve to write in 1980 a book that predicts that by 1985 the Soviets will have invaded Western Europe and the French monarchy restored, and then in 1985 write another book about how your first one has been vindicated: but M. Fontbrune is clearly not short of nerve.

This book includes a section denouncing all the other authors who he claims have

cashed in on his first book (including the author of a fascinating-sounding book entitled *Nostradamus Jam Recipies*) and goes on to quote items from his first book that he claims have been fulfilled. He suppresses all the 'World War III by 1985' references but includes as prophecies mostly those items in his first book relating to events already underway in 1980, such as unrest in Poland and trouble between Iran and Iraq.

Also of interest is the fact that he reprints Nostradamus's introduction to his prophecies, whose absence from the first book I commented on in *Magonia* 18. This introduction is clearly a problem for Nostradamus believers since it describes in clear language a future for Europe that bears no relationship to anything that actually happened. Fontbrune however is equal to the challenge. He simply divides Nostradamus's narrative into small sections, enabling him to claim that one bit was fulfilled by Hitler, another by Napoleon, and so on, in no particular historical order. He also continues to misrepresent Nostradamus's interest in the year 1792 by slipping in a bracketed reference to the French monarchy, which is not as much as hinted at in the original. He reprints the prophecy of a great future for Venice around 1800 but forgets his usual parade of historical erudition enough not to mention to his readers that in fact Napoleon ended Venetian independence at this time.

Is this simply deliberate charlatanism? Presumably that accounts for a large part of Fontbrune's motives. However, in view of his manifest animosity to the French government and the European Peace Movement perhaps it belongs partly in the old genre of discovering ancient prophecies to buttress a political case. R.S.

HESELTON, Philip, GODDARD, Jimmy and BAINES, Paul. *Skyways and Landmarks Revisited; a re-evaluation of Tony Wedd's work on leys and flying saucers*. Northern Earth Mysteries/Surrey Earth Mysteries Groups, 1985. £1.00, from Philip Heselton, 170 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DY.

Contemporary ufological speculation on links between geological conditions and UFO phenomena is merely the latest point in a line of thought which has perceived a close link between aerial and earthly phenomenon. This short booklet comes at an apposite moment, reminding us as it does of some of the very earliest attempts to link UFOs and leys. The core of the booklet is a reprint of Tony Wedd's pamphlet of 1961 in which he first records his impressions of landscape lines linked to saucer sightings; and Philip Heselton and Jimmy Goddard's

subsequent reinvestigation of Wedd's data. I have no doubt that the statistically-minded ley-hunter or ufologist could challenge the significance of Wedd's landscape geometry, and certainly the ufologist would be quite unimpressed by the individual UFO sightings that are pressed into service to support the UFO/landscape link.

But this hardly matters - I find leys more convincing as art than science (Wedd was an artist, he published a book on design), and this booklet gives a fascinating insight into the origins of one of the main currents in contemporary ufological debate. Curiously, I think that whilst the 'scientific' ley hunters will dismiss Wedd's contributions to 'serious' ufology, the 'sociologically' inclined ufologists will recognise his role as an unacknowledged leader of one of the main strands which form the ufological legend. J.R.

DAVIES, Paul. *Superforces; the search for a Grand Unified Field Theory of Nature*. London, Heinemann, 1984. £12.95.

A further examination of the fringes of cosmology and physics. If indeed the whole of the universe can be described, as Davies suggests, in terms of a single 'superforce', it leaves very little room for alleged paranormal forces. Certainly, unless the alleged facts of psychical research can be definitely verified and related mathematically to the general corpus of physical theory, it is most unlikely that the majority of scientists will take much note of them.

On the other hand, those with a Fortean cast of mind will point out that much of this book is curiously unreflective old-fashioned natural theology, combined with the belief that physics is on the verge of the final discovery; and is very reminiscent of the physics seen at the turn of the last century.

Davies equates truth and beauty, without even contemplating the probability that beauty is culturally relative. Nowhere is the possibility of general cultural influences on science discussed; and the old game goes on of rendering God in one's own image - in this case as the divine mathematician.

The account of the spontaneous, uncaused emergence of space-time out of a dimensionless void is an interesting modern myth which has some similarities with the evolutionary cosmos of the Polynesian creation chants. P. R.

MICHELL, John. *Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions*. Thames & Hudson, 1984. £9.95

In the last few years there have been several books about the world of the fringe scientists and eccentric theorists. Some of these books have shown a tendency to copy

from each other and rely on secondary sources (rather like some of the people they write about) as well as to treat their characters simply as lunatics paraded for the reader's amusement.

John Michell's book avoids these failings. He has much original material on some fascinating but little-known figures such as Comyns Beaumont, who in the 1940's not only proposed theories of cosmic catastrophes in historical times, but attempted to prove that the Biblical Jerusalem had been sited at Edinburgh and that Dumbarton was ancient Athens.

In addition Michell treats his subjects with rather more respect than most writers in this field. He shows that many of them, far from being lunatics, were, when not proposing fringe theories, people of considerable substance. Beaumont, for instance, was a major Fleet Street figure, while Ignatius Donnelly, father both of modern Baconianism and Atlantology was an important personality in late nineteenth century US politics. (A surprisingly high number of people featured in this book seem to have combined fringe theorising with attempts to set up Utopian communities).

This book also makes clear that the people it features did not exist in isolation from the mainstream of thought and ideas. Lord Momboddo, the eighteenth century judge who attempted to prove that apes were members of the human race who might be taught civilised ways came in for ridicule, but the boundary between nature and culture was a major topic in the philosophy of the period, and led eminent thinkers to take an interest in the reports of wildmen and wolf-children.

Similarly, Victorian attempts to prove the British the lost tribes of Israel were simply the most explicit expression of the combination of nationalism and evangelical religion that was a major part of the ideology of the period.

The attempts of fringe theorists to compare themselves with Pasteur, Galileo and other scientific figures ridiculed by their contemporaries are tiresome, but this book does feature one or two figures who, in retrospect, we can judge differently from the way they must have been seen at the time. Lord Momboddo anticipated some of the ideas of Darwin. Geoffrey Pyke, the World War II scientist who bombarded the British Government with plans to build huge ships from mixtures of ice and wood-shavings and to solve the energy problems of post-war Europe with pedal powered trains, now seems not a stereotyped mad scientist, but a precursor of the Alternative Technology movement.

Even as bizarre a figure as Comyns

Beaumont anticipated not merely the better known catastrophe theories of Velikovsky, but some of the speculations of Hoyle and Wickramasingh regarding comets. By contrast, the chapter on Sir Francis Galton, the leading Victorian anthropologist, presents us with a figure who although highly respected in his own lifetime now seems, with his attempts to draw up statistical tables to measure women's attractiveness and the frequency of lying amongst different nationalities, to be as weird as anyone from the scientific fringe.

Unlike most other books in this field, this one has little to say on contemporary figures like Berlitz and von Daniken. However it is salutary to note the contrast between fringe figures of the past, who reached their conclusions after wide reading and sacrificed friends, money and even sanity to the task of spreading what they considered vital truths; with their modern equivalents, copying dubious informations from each other's books with both eyes on sales figures. R.S.

DAVIES, Paul. *God and the New Physics*. Dent, 1983. £8.95

In this admirable survey of the philosophical and theological implications of the latest frontiers in physics and cosmology, Davies argues that science offers a clearer route to God than religion, about which he says some harsh things. Cosmologists are now searching for a single mathematical formula which would explain the origin of "the universe, mind and everything" from a quantum of fluctuation in a dimensional void.

Davies argues that reality can be perceived at both reductionist and holistic levels, and that the mistakes of classical dualism and materialism lie in their failure to appreciate this. Mind and body are seen not as two separate interacting 'things', but two entirely different concepts, "drawn from different levels in a hierarchy of description". In particular, mind is to be regarded as the higher level description of the pattern of activity within the brain.

Many ideas expressed at the frontiers of modern physics are extraordinary, such as naked singularities as interfaces between the natural and supernatural. John Wheeler's suggestion that a present-day observer could be partly responsible for organising the universe in the remote past, or Davies's concluding speculations concerning a hierarchy of possible extraterrestrial agents, culminating in a 'supreme mind' - the universe as a living being (how Charles Fort would have loved that!). Clearly these represent speculations 'out on a limb', and I am not sure that many physicists would want to go that far.

Nevertheless it is significant that these

speculations are founded on mainstream physics, and are far more imaginative than many of the unimaginative and old-fashioned 'theories' in psychical research and ufology.

Additional speculations occur to me, such as: Some physicists stress the central role of self-consciousness in the organisation of the universe; events 'crystallise' when observed. Some anthropologists stress the importance of social interaction in the development of self-consciousness. Put these two principles together and you have...?

If life and mind are emergent properties, then does human society as a whole possess 'higher level' properties, no more accessible to individual human beings than this magazine is accessible to individual neurons?

Wheeler, Davies and others tend to complain about 'paranormalists' abusing their work. But if they really take the speculations such as those in this book even half-seriously what possible theoretical objection have they, not only to any number of anomalous experiences; if they don't take them seriously, but simply put them in to add to the excitement, don't they deserve what they get?

P.R.

GROSS, Loren E. **UFOs: a history. Vol. 2, 1949.** Arcturus Book Service, 1983. (Available in UK from John Trotter, 11 Laurel Way, London N 20, £12.00)

As Gross's histories move increasingly into areas already well documented it becomes more difficult to work out just at whom they are aimed. The expensive ring-binder format is unlikely to appeal to the casual reader, while the presentation lacks the range which the social historian would like, or the depth which the physicist interested in the 'reality' of the phenomenon would demand.

Gross however continues to dig out fascinating sidelines. For example, a medical doctor suggested a correlation between the 'flying discs' and polio outbreaks, a suggestion taken sufficiently seriously by the authorities to warrant a statistical analysis.

Much of this volume is devoted to 'green fireballs', now largely a forgotten facet of ufological history. Though officially ascribed to meteors, it is difficult to resist the notion that they were the product of various military tests. Some of the cases given here are, if accurately reported, very resistant to conventional explanations.

P.R.

CLARIE, Thomas C. **Occult/Paranormal Bibliography: an annotated list of books published in English, 1976 through 1981.** Scarecrow Press, 1984. £42.00.

This is a massive compilation (500 pp.) listing 1814 items in author order, with the great majority of the items annotated, and with author, title and subject indexes. The annotations aim to give an indication of the books' contents and quotes from reviews, chiefly from *Fate* or the standard American review sources, *Choice* and *Library Journal*. Items which the compiler considers to be major contributions to the field are given three asterisks; valuable but lesser contributions receive one asterisk. This grading is largely for the guidance of reference librarians.

There is no doubt that this compilation will be of great benefit to future social historians, with a strong background knowledge in at least some of the subjects, seeking to chart the spread of occult literature. It would also be of value to the collector or researcher in any of the fields covered if its price was more realistic.

However, given the price (which must, in part at least, be due to currency exchange rates beyond the publishers control) the only serious potential customer in Britain will be libraries, and as a reference tool for non-specialist libraries it possesses a series of shortcomings.

It is obvious that the book was compiled as a result of a 'trawling operation', and that virtually everything appearing in bibliographies or publishers catalogues as 'occult/paranormal' was included. Scholarly works on mediaeval witchcraft, technical treatises on parapsychology, sectarian occult literature, popular parapsychology and reams of rubbish jostle uneasily together. A sizeable proportion of the literature seems to consist of juvenile works of negligible merit, written by a variety of 'in-house' hacks.

The bibliography reinforces the tendentious 'connection' between parapsychology and anomalists on the one hand, and a variety of occult theologies on the other.

It is obvious that no one person could have detailed knowledge or interest in such a variety of fields. Thus Clarie's ignorance

of what is or is not important in ufology is all too clear: for example, Hendry's **UFO Handbook** receives seventeen lines, while the execrable **UFO Guidebook** is granted 26 lines, and Clarie berates reviewers who rubbish it.

British librarians should note that many British books do not receive annotations. It is also highly probable that many of items listed here will be quite unobtainable in Britain - though few of the unobtainable will be missed.

Though Clarie declared his intention of producing mainly informative rather than evaluative annotations, he has on a number of

occasions abandoned this policy. He gives lyrical praise to Castaneda (who gets three full pages), while his comments on Hansell's **ESP and Parapsychology; a critical evaluation** consist of fourteen lines of description and 24 of uninformative 'criticism'. The length of annotation, nor the number and extent of reviews cited, seems to have no relation to the importance of the books under consideration. Rupert Furneaux's **The Tungus Event**, a potboiler of no great merit, gets 35 lines; Gourlay's **The Great Lakes Triangle** gets 32, and so on. Many of the annotations are far too long, especially as neither the author, editor or typesetter seems to have heard of the paragraph.

Far too many of the reviews quoted are anonymous - not much use in subjects where the reviewers' interests and biases must be known to evaluate the reviews. In some cases the reviewer is obviously as daft as the book, such as the anonymous hack who described Kraspedon's **My Contact with Flying Saucers** as 'serious and scholarly'.

Many librarians will simply go by the asterisk codes, and a pretty odd choice they make - single stars to over-hyped nonsense like von D. and the Amityville 'horror', a barmy book on Noah's Ark, and triple stars for Castaneda's novels. Triple stars also for the eccentric **Secret of Atlantis** by Otto Muck, who argues that an Atlantic Atlantis was blown up by an asteroid which caused Noah's flood. Two anonymous reviewers boost it, and Clarie gives it a page of annotation.

Given these shortcomings, and the price, I really cannot recommend this book to any except specialist libraries. A pity, because it is by no means uninteresting. So long as public libraries in this country remain constrained by rate-capping policies, I really feel that Scarecrow are wasting their time importing expensive, American-oriented bibliographies.

P.R.

LONG, Barry. **The Origins of Man and the Universe: the Myth that came to life.** Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984. £6.95

"Read on...Don't try to understand... There is nothing to prove." Simply take the author's advice and "let the words wash through you and over you", and you will have a consciousness-raising experience. At least you will if you are into this sort of thing. If not, then like me you probably won't be able to make much sense out of it. For example, do you know what the UFOs are up to? They are using up the past. There are not so many of them around these days because they have run out of past. This operation was necessary because "Too much past was accumulating

and choking the psyche". There is a lot more of that sort of thing but we are not supposed to take it literally. How we are supposed to take it, I have no idea. J.H.

LE SHAN, Lawrence. **From Newton to ESP; Parapsychology and the Challenge of Modern Science.** Turnstone Press, Wellingborough, 1984. £5.95

Can the alleged phenomena of parapsychology be reconciled with modern scientific insights and theories? Lawrence LeShan believes that they can and he attempts to show that psi phenomena can be accepted in a way that does not contradict current scientific theories.

He approaches the problem by dividing human perceptions into normal perceptions (Type A) and paranormal perceptions (Type B). He says that Type B perceptions do not involve the senses. Both kinds of perception are mysterious. In normal perception the gap in our knowledge "concerns how the changes in our brain brought about by sensory stimulation were changed into conscious experience." In paranormal perception the question is: "How does the information get from the original source to consciousness?"

LeShan asserts that both problems are equally mysterious. However, the question of how changes in our brains caused by sensory input give rise to conscious experience is not generally recognised as being a scientific question but a philosophical one. As for Type B perceptions, most scientists would argue that information cannot enter the human brain except through the senses.

Are Type B perceptions what they appear to be? That is, does the human mind receive information in some mysterious, non-physical manner? The author seems unwilling to get to grips with this question but instead engages in lengthy discussions about the nature of consciousness, and about 'meaningful behaviour'.

One of his arguments is to the effect that whereas bodies occupy space, consciousness does not, so it is not meaningful to talk of consciousness as being in a particular place. If we understand this argument we will no longer tend to think of psi phenomena as being impossible. The problem with this argument is that when we consider alleged psi phenomena we are not concerned about consciousness, but about how information gets from one place to another apparently without any physical process being involved in its transference.

Although LeShan has attempted in this book to give to parapsychology what it so obviously lacks - a sound philosophical basis - I do not feel that he has succeeded. J.H.

NORTHERN E·C·H·O·S

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THE INTERESTS of our field are not especially served by the invention of ungainly neologisms, and anyone who has tried to come to grips with the complexities of definitions of 'true', 'real', 'pre', 'exotic' UFOs etc. will be only too aware of the pitfalls involved.

Can I be the only person who does not think that, for example, 'Oz Factor' is a suitable substitute for 'enchantment', or that in the updating a vast depth of meaning is lost? If we start talking of enchantment (or the French term 'starstruck') and radical misperceptions it is obvious that we are dealing with a wealth of experiences, of which those classed as ufological or paranormal are amongst the most insignificant. Be that as it may, when we have accounts of people enchanted by the moon or the 'lone star in the sky' to the point where they become awesome spaceships, it is surely to art and literature that we must turn, knowing that we are dealing with Van Gogh's sky rather than Einstein's space.

On the topic of radical misperceptions of the Moon, the following quotations may be of interest:

The Moon itself, as big as a little house and as round as a ball, shining like yellow silver... stood on the grass, down on the very grass. I could see nothing else for the very brightness of it. And as I stared and wondered a door opened in the side of it near the ground, and a curious little old man looked out and said: "Come along Nanny, my lady wants you, we've come to fetch you". I wasn't a bit frightened. I went up to the beautiful bright thing, and the old man held down his hand, and I took hold of it and gave a jump, and he gave me a lift, and I was inside the Moon. And what

*do you think it was like? It was such a pretty little house, with blue windows and white curtains! At one of the windows sat a beautiful lady with her head leaning on her hand, looking out... The little man closed the door and began to pull at a rope which hung behind it... and the Moon went up into the sky once more like an old-fashioned lift. [George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*, (1871)]*

Or look at this description by a 17-year-old girl:

*A cold shaft of moonlight was shining across the foot of my bed. It was awesomely lonely. The Moon seemed to be sending a message to me, it had even woken me up with its light, had forced me to get out and stare at it. Although I was alone in the room, I felt I was the only living body on earth. There appeared to be a power in the Moon leaving me wondering at its melancholy pureness. Its clarity filled me with dread; it seemed to peer right through, yet I could not grasp the message it was giving me. [Michael Pattard, *Inglorious Word-sworths; a study of some transcendental experiences in childhood and adolescence*, Hodder, 1973]*

I have always felt that John Keel's skills as a writer have been underestimated, and compared with the average blood and guts horror story of the Frank Herbert/Stephen King genre, *Mothman Prophecies* (which would have made an excellent film) is a masterpiece of understated terror. Much of its power rests in its roots in real folklore, and that source's reflections of powerlessness, futility, failed dreams and inability to communicate.

Thus the fall of the Silver Bridge symbolises the failure of all bridges of communication and understanding. The sense of futility is compounded by the way in which 'Mr Apol' and the other communicators 'fade away', and Keel laconically reports the failure of the marriages of two of his central subjects. Point Pleasant (an extraordinarily ironic name) becomes a symbol of all small-town America, threatened by the barely understood changes of the mid 60's. Mothman itself is a brooding presence of nameless dread, a sort of preternatural vulture, like the "wicked bird of prey feeding on breadcrumb sins" in Bob Dylan's *Gods of Eden*.

Keel's general intellectual argument is, if I understand it correctly, that humanity is fallen under the dominance of cultural artifacts such as belief systems which masquerade as absolute truths.